

Farm & Market REPORT



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Commissioner's Column

Relish Local Food: It's a Valuable and Secure Resource

By Jonathan L. Healy

In these strange, sad days of wrenching change, the positive aspects of our local farms may not be foremost in our minds. But they should be. Up until now, Wall Street and the venture capital folks have all extolled big multi-nationals that make money for shareholders by flying in cheap food from all parts of the globe. Just a few years ago, most of our food came from our region. Now, on average, our food comes from over 1,500 miles away and the distance is increasing exponentially every year. What happens to cheap food if oil goes up to \$100 per barrel and foreign sources of food become problematic?

The terrible events of this fall underscore the need for us to have a secure food supply, keep farmland open, and buy local sources of food whenever possible. Some people say there isn't enough farming or farmland in Massachusetts, New England, or the East to worry about local supplies. This is simply not the case.

For example, in the Connecticut River Valley, our Department has worked hard to create and retain markets for local farmers. Rather than losing a local company, Cain's, we worked hard to help find a new buyer, M.A. Gedney Pickle Company of Minnesota, so that our farmers would continue to have a local market. We are not just talking a few crates here as Gedney, under their newly formed operating subsidiary Cains Pickles, Inc., bought over 26.5 million pounds of cucumbers (2,200 acres worth) and two million pounds of cherry peppers and three million pounds of banana peppers (250 acres worth).

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Biosecurity: More Important than Ever

Experts say that one goal of our terrorist enemies is to interrupt the economic life of our country. Introduction of a highly contagious organism capable of causing widespread disease in livestock or poultry would achieve that result. Animal agriculture is a vital industry in the United States linked to tens of thousands of jobs in related industries such as food processing and retailing through markets and restaurants.

In addition, American livestock producers and processors export over \$6 billion dollars in meat products annually. The occurrence of a foreign animal disease in the United States, introduced through an act of bioterrorism, could effectively reduce or wholly eliminate our export markets in livestock products and disrupt the nation's economy and food supply.

Given the active interstate trade of livestock in this country and the highly contagious nature of some biological agents such as foot and mouth disease, no area of the country is immune. Foot and mouth disease introduced into Massachusetts on a Monday could be disseminated through much of the nation by the end of the week.

In light of these concerns and the disturbing recent events, our Bureau of Animal Health offers this advice:

- Livestock keepers should reevaluate security on their premises, particularly with regard to the risk of intruders entering the premises at night. Animal houses, feed

storage facilities, fertilizer storage areas, watering tanks, and milk houses should be made secure so that they can not be tampered with at night.

- If possible, animals maintained at pasture should be housed. If this is not feasible, then the animals should be visited daily, a head count made, and any signs of illness noted.
- All animals on the premises should be inspected daily to evaluate their health. Any unusual or unexpected problems should be recognized and a veterinarian called right away to examine the animals. Signs of disease of particular concern are sudden deaths, high fevers, abortions, blisters or sores around the mouth and feet, or any obvious changes in behavior or coordination.
- Heightened biosecurity measures should be in force. Ideally, closed herds or flocks should be maintained. If animals must be bought, try to acquire them from other closed herds or flocks rather than from dealers or auctions. All purchased animals should be isolated in a separate building for at least 10 days before turning in with the existing herd or flock. This will ensure that animals incubating highly contagious diseases will be detected before they expose other animals.
- Do not allow strangers on the premises. Require visitors to wear boots and coveralls and place disinfectant footbaths outside animal housing. Do not allow outside vehicles into areas occupied by animals.

If you have any questions, please call our Bureau of Animal Health at 617-626-1795. ♦

Anthrax Facts for Animal Owners & Handlers

In light of the ongoing threats of bioterrorism related to anthrax, people who have contact with animals have expressed concern about their risk of contracting the disease. According to DFA's Bureau of Animal Health, the current situation does not represent any increased risk of anthrax for people owning or handling animals.

Anthrax already exists in the U.S. and has been here for centuries. The bacteria are common in soil, especially where livestock have been grazed, or around barns where livestock are kept. The bacteria, when exposed to oxygen, converts to a spore form which can persist in soil for decades. Despite this widespread presence of anthrax spores in soil, the spontaneous occurrence of clinical anthrax in animals and people has remained historically very low.

It is true that farm animals can get anthrax spores on their hair, wool and skin from laying in contaminated pastures or barnyards. Before people can become infected, however, repeated contact and exposure

to animal skin, hair and fleece is usually required. Therefore, most cases of human anthrax are seen in people working in industries where such contact is common and repetitive. This would include sheep shearers, slaughterhouse workers, textile workers, and veterinarians. Even when such people contract anthrax, it is usually the milder skin form that develops, not the more dangerous respiratory form. Companion animals such as dogs and cats, are unlikely to carry anthrax spores on their coats unless they are farmyard residents.

As a general precaution, anyone petting or handling animals should always wash their hands after such contact. This is common sense for preventing a variety of diseases, not only anthrax. If you are involved in shearing, you should wear gloves and long-sleeved clothing. In addition, wearing a face mask, such as your dental hygienist wears, may also be advisable.

If you have any questions, please call the Bureau of Animal Health at 617 626-1795. ♦

FARM-CITY CONNECTIONS

National Farm-City Week—Now and Ongoing

Each year the week concluding with Thanksgiving Day has been proclaimed by the President of the United States to emphasize the successful partnerships between rural and urban residents. The week this year is November 16 to 22.

The theme of "partners in progress" emphasizes the theme that by providing an abundant supply of safe, high-quality food and fiber, our farmers contribute to a quality of life that is unmatched around the world. The key is the interdependence among farmers, those who consume the products and all those in the production and marketing chain.

"Farm-City" events can be held at any time of year, however, and the National Farm-City Council has some excellent organizational brochures, resources and literature. If you or a group you belong to would like to plan a "farm-city event" in the coming year, please call 617-626-1735, or e-mail Janet.Christensen@state.ma.us.

Mass. Agriculture in the Classroom Conference January 26th

"Growing Minds through Massachusetts Agriculture" is the name of the statewide conference for educators to be held in Auburn at the Ramada Inn. The meeting will offer ideas and activities for integrating agriculture into school curriculums.

Four workshop themes will explore an introduction to Massachusetts agriculture, agriculture technologies, the farm to school connection and school gardening.

Professional development points for teachers will be offered. For more information on this daylong meeting, visit the website www.aginclassroom.org or phone 508-336-4426 or 617-626-1735.

Boston Public Market Update

The Friends of the Boston Public Market are continuing their search for a suitable site in the Boston area for a year round indoor market for Massachusetts fresh and processed products. During the summer months, the group exhibited at Celebrate Seaport! and the City Hall Farmers' Market to promote the concept to Boston shoppers.

If you would like to receive periodic progress updates or offer suggestions for development or support, please call 617-626-1735 or e-mail Janet.Christensen@state.ma.us.

The goal of the market is to serve the public as an outlet for local producer cooperatives and growers of fresh produce, dairy and poultry products, aquaculture and seafood products, and horticultural products. ♦

Mass. Ag. Calendar: a Great Holiday Gift

The Massachusetts Agriculture Calendar 2002, featuring this year's photo contest winners, is available for holiday gift giving. Send a check payable to Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom with your name and address to: Calendar, Mass. Dept. of Food and Agriculture, 251 Causeway Street, Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114.

Agro-Environmental Technology Program Seeks Proposals

Got an idea for a new agricultural technology that would help Massachusetts farmers address environmental and economic concerns? If so, you're invited to submit a proposal to Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture's Agro-Environmental Technology Grant Program.

The "Agro-Tech" program provides matching grants up to \$50,000 to organizations and individuals for demonstration projects, feasibility analyses and applied research projects that address agriculture-related environmental concerns and stimulate development and viability in the food and agriculture industry. Last year, nine projects were funded with an average award of \$13,500.

The Request For Proposals (RFR) is available on-line on the Department's web site at <http://www.state.ma.us/dfa/funding/grants.htm>. Proposals are due by January 26, 2002. For more information or to request a copy of the RFR, contact Susan Phinney at 617-626-1772, Susan.Phinney@state.ma.us. ♦

Western Mass. Food Processing Center Opens

The Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC) showcased its new Western Mass. Food Processing Center with a Grand Opening on Thursday, November 15th, followed by its Annual Meeting Dinner featuring local foods prepared in the new commercial kitchen facility. The new facility is the first commercial kitchen of this size in Massachusetts, notes FCCDC Executive Director John Waite.

Developed by the FCCDC with grant funding totaling almost \$800,000, the new food processing center dramatically increases the opportunities for growers and food producers to start or grow their businesses. The fully equipped, state Board of Health certified kitchen facility will be rented to businesses and groups on an hourly basis. Classes and technical assistance will also be available.

State Senator Stanley Rosenberg and Commissioner Jay Healy, spearheaded the drive to make the Food Processing Center a reality. U.S. Senator John Olver, David Tuttle of the USDA, and state representatives Stephen Kulik, John Merrigan and Shaun Kelly also helped ensure the successful completion of the project.

Locally produced chutney, organic pizza, marinara sauce, salad dressing, and seasonal products made from apples and berries are among the first products slated to be produced by food entrepreneurs at the new facility. ♦

Clean Water News Briefs

Water Quality Improvement Grant Largest in History

This year DFA's Agricultural Environmental Improvement Program (AEEP) will award \$400,000 in funding to assist farmers in addressing potential non-point pollution sources on their farms. In addition to the Rivers Protections Act funds of \$200,000, DFA is contributing \$150,000 and Coastal Zone Management is contributing \$50,000. Forty-three applications representing a total of \$560,000 in requests were received in the latest round of applications that closed October 12.

Coastal Zone Management Allocates Funds to Farmers

The state Coastal Zone Management Program received federal funding to implement the State's Nonpoint Source Pollution Plan. Fifty thousand dollars is being made available to farmers through the AEEP program application which closed October 12. Farmers living in the Coastal Zone watersheds will be targeted for these funds.

DFA Receives Source Water Protection Grant

DFA is very pleased to have been selected for an \$85,000 grant from the state Department of Environmental Protection to provide technical assistance to farmers and source water suppliers about agricultural best management practices for drinking water protection. This one-year grant will augment the work being done through the AEEP program to help producers improve water quality.

For more information, contact Susan Phinney, Coordinator, at 617-626-1772 or Susan.Phinney@state.ma.us. ♦

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We are pleased that MassDevelopment, our Commonwealth's prime economic development pump, recently announced a \$4 million tax-exempt industrial development bond to finance the purchase of a manufacturing facility and equipment for their growing pickle business. Cain's Pickle Company ranks number one in relish sales and number two in pickle sales in the Northeast.

We are pleased to work for Massachusetts farmers. One of our biggest tasks is to educate all our Massachusetts consumers about where their food comes from. Using locally made relish puts at least \$5 million dollars into the hands of Pioneer Valley farmers. So I hope we can all think about local connections the next time we put that mustard and relish on our Fenway Franks, not to mention all the other great, safe local food grown by other Massachusetts farmers. ♦

Agricultural Business Training Available to Farmers in Three Regions

DFA will again offer its acclaimed NxLevel® course "Tilling The Soil of Opportunity" from early December through February, 2001-02. All 30 farms that took the course in 2000-01 rated it highly. Course sites are in the Dartmouth, Lowell and Lee areas.

Classes meet one evening per week, and are aimed at existing agricultural businesses seeking management tools and skills to increase profitability, security and sustainability in an increasingly challenging market environment.

The course takes farmers step-by-step through creation of a comprehensive business plan. Students who complete the course qualify for certified "Borrower Training" status with the USDA/FSA, and the resultant plan can link to eligibility with the DFA Farm Viability Enhancement Program.

In addition to these offerings in north central Mass. and eastern Berkshire County, two courses which were offered in southeastern Mass. last season are back by popular demand (enhanced by local partners SEMAP and UMass Dartmouth).

The Dartmouth course will be supplemented through a series of short courses and seminars described on the list elsewhere on this page.

For beginning farmers (and those who are just thinking about going into farming), the New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI) will join DFA and SEMAP to offer a four-session Explorer Course in February of 2002.

Information on all courses is available from the program director, Rick Chandler, 413-577-0459, rchandler@umext.umass.edu. ♦

UMass Dartmouth Offers Agricultural Business Short Courses

For information on the following workshops, contact Irene Winkler at Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership at 508-295-1317 ext. 130 or Dr. Antone Vieira at UMass Dartmouth at 508-999-8744. Registrations are processed on a first come, first serve space available basis. The university enrollment center will accept registrations in person, by fax at 508-910-640, or by telephone at 508-999-9129.

NEW! Computer Training for Agricultural Businesses

Jan 7-10, M Th 6:00-9:00 pm, \$49

This course is designed for the beginner to acquaint you with common computer terminology and provide you with hands-on experience.

NEW! Introduction to the Internet for Agricultural Businesses

Jan 8, Tu 6:00 pm-9:00 pm, \$29

This course will cover the following topics: What is the WWW? What is a search engine? What is a browser? How to search on the Internet? How to access agricultural reports from the web? What is a Web page? The course will also show you how to use email.

NEW! Quickbooks Pro for Agricultural Businesses

Jan 15-31, Tu Th 5:00-9:00 pm, \$179

This course will provide you with a financial organizer for business. It will cover the fundamentals of Quickbooks Pro, accounts receivable, accounts payable, inventory, sales tax, payroll, taxes, year-end, and further use of reports will all be covered.

NEW! Financial Management Seminar: Agricultural Business

Feb 5, Tu 6:00-9:00 pm, \$29

This seminar will cover various topics of interest to the group including: capital expenditures policies,

long-term and short-term financing problems, dividend policies, mergers and consolidating, and trends in the financial markets for agriculture.

NEW! Financial Management Seminar: Selling Development Rights

Feb 7, Th 6:00-9:00 pm, \$29

Financial planning for those interested in selling development rights. This course will include topics such as appropriate asset allocation based on investment goal, and helping to define that goal.

NEW! Agricultural Marketing

Feb 12-14, Tu Th 6:00-9:00 pm, \$49

This course provides a basic understanding of the role and scope of responsibilities facing contemporary agricultural marketing management. Emphasis will be placed on the integration of marketing principles into an organized approach for decision making. Niche markets, direct markets, value-added product markets will all be explored.

NEW! Seminars on Developing Your Business Vision: Agricultural Business

Feb 19, Tu 6:00-9:00 pm, \$29

This seminar will convene a focus group to address actual barriers individuals face in obtaining business success. Leasing land compared to owning, unwilling or unable to make long term investments, agricultural technical assistance, trends and successes, as well as, planning and business vision will all be explored.

NEW! Seminars on Developing Your Business Vision: Equestrian Business Law

Jan 24, Th 1:00-4:00 pm, \$29

From a Lawyer's Perspective: Legal Advice for the Equestrian. Whether you own one horse for pleasure or run a full-scale boarding and training facility, you need to know the law as it applies to horse and business ownership. ♦

CLASSIFIED

Cape Cod Cranberries – the best quality berries direct from our bags. For your farm stand and wholesale needs. 1 and 3 lb. Bags and 30 lb. Boxes. Antique wooden cranberry boxes to loan for your store displays. P.J. Cranberries, P.O. Box 417, Sandwich, MA 02563, 508-888-7676, pjcran@prodigy.net.

For Sale: about 100 Crested Blue Swedish ducks (some cross breeds and most have the rare tufted or crested heads). Good egg layers in the spring and summer months. These are all offspring from a MA DFA inspected flock. \$4.00 each. 508-278-5017 or info@ArrowheadAcres.com.

Canning jar lids for sale. Size: regular, color: white with 50's style fruited design. \$40/case of 40+ dozen or \$1/dozen. 508-879-0634.

Help wanted: The Food Project is looking for Grower's Assistants for a 21 acre farm outside of Boston. This is a full time position from April-November, 2002. Workers compensation, \$375 per week. Send resume and cover letter to Tammy Texeria, The Food Project, PO Box 256165, Dorchester, MA 02125 or visit www.thefoodproject.org.

For Sale: Cold frames, 2 row planter, egg sorter, mister, sinks & 3 panel windows. Make an offer to 508-697-2752.

Goats For Sale: 2yr. old Reg. Toggs doe-great milker, 3 mo. old Reg. Toggs buck from 4-H herd, 508-867-9735.

Empire Packaging Company – wholesale and retail packaging. Gift cartons, apple bags and much more. Call 800-562-5520. Make us your packaging resource.

Assistant Manager needed to help with all aspects of operation at Brookfield Farm, a 500-share CSA growing 25 acres of vegetables in Amherst, MA. Experience required. Fax resume to 413-253-7991 or email to bfcsl@aol.com. Please contact by phone 413-253-7991 or email with further questions.

Sherwood Consultants now can provide technical expertise in the use of herbicides and fertilizers in addition to its usual business and financial farm services. Call: Woody Pratt at 617-232-8818 or E-mail to sherconsl@aol.com.

Highly successful fish-based fertilizer now available. Approved for organic farming by ORMI. Particularly suitable for vegetables and small fruits. SCI-Distributors, Inc. Jay Tripp, 508-789-4145, Jay11745@aol.com.

For sale: wrapped silage bales, grass mixed clover and alfalfa. 2nd & 3rd cutting, extra wrapped, \$35. 1-413-527-4104.

Red Fire Farm in Granby MA is seeking dedicated managers and interns. Farm grows 15-20 acres of certified organic vegetable, flower and greenhouse crops. Positions available include: Assistant Vegetable Grower, Weed Manager, Cut Flower Manager, and two General Intern positions. Contact Ryan at 413-467-7645.

Subscribe to the New England Farm Bulletin. \$17/year includes 2 free farm classifieds or \$17 in free information booklets, monthly publication, annual almanac, New England fairs and farmers' market directory, monthly farm classifieds and features, access to rare farm topics and more! NEFB, Dept. MA, PO Box 67, Taunton, MA 02780.

How to Place a Classified Ad

Classified ads are accepted free-of charge on a first-come basis. Limit: 25 words. Be sure to include a phone number. No display ads will be accepted. Only one ad per business/individual per issue, unless space permits. Ads may run in consecutive issues, space permitting.

Ads must be of interest to Massachusetts farmers. The Mass. Dept. of Food and Agriculture reserves the right to refuse any listing it deems inappropriate for publication.

Send typewritten or neatly printed copy to: Farm & Market Report, Mass. Dept. of Food and Agriculture, 251 Causeway Street, Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114, 617-626-1752 fax: 617-626-1850, e-mail: Diane.Baedecker@state.ma.us

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Janet Christensen, Director, Education and Outreach

Diane Baedeker Petit, Editor, Farm & Market Report

This publication is available in alternate formats upon request.

SAVE THE DATE: NE Products Trade Show

The 18th annual New England Products Trade Show (NEPTS) will be held March 10-12, 2002 in Portland, Maine, and is hosted by the Maine Products Marketing Program of the Department of Economic & Community Development. This juried business-to-business trade show is a premier event featuring only New England made giftware, home furnishings, and gourmet specialty foods, as well as vendor services. Scholarships are offered to emerging and qualifying businesses. For exhibitor, sponsor, or buyer information, please contact Giraffe Events at 207-781-5756 or info@giraffeevents.com. And visit the show web site at www.nepts.com! ♦

calendar 2001-2002

November 29-30 – Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting at the Holiday Inn, Mansfield/Foxborough. For more information, contact Ceci Ferro, MFBF, 508-881-4766.

December 6 – State House Christmas Tree Lighting, Boston. Local producers are invited to sample their products. Contact Mary Jordan, 617-626-1750, Mary.Jordan@state.ma.us or Bonita Oehlke, 617-626-1753, Bonita.Oehlke@state.ma.us.

December 7-9 – Third Northeast Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Conference at the Frost Valley Environmental Education Center, Claryville, New York. Call 802-229-1441 or e-mail csaconference@together.net

December 9-10 – Farm to School Cafeteria Northeast Regional Conference at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. Contact Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman, 607-255-0417 hmm1@cornell.edu or visit http://www.cals.cornell.edu/agfoodcommunity/afs_ld.cfm for more information.

December 11-13 – New England Vegetable and Berry Growers Conference and Trade Show at the Sturbridge Host Hotel. Featuring more than 120 educational presentations and 80 exhibitor booths. For registration information contact Dr. Anne Carter, 413-545-5216, akcarter@pssci.umass.edu, for conference information contact Dr. Vern Grubinger, 802-257-7967, for trade show information, call Dom Marini at 508-378-2546.

January 26 -- Mass. Agriculture in the Classroom Conference at the Ramada Inn, Auburn. "Growing Minds through Massachusetts Agriculture" is the theme of this conference for educators. Visit the website www.aginclassroom.org or phone 508-336-4426 or 617-626-1735 for more information.

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To subscribe, send an e-mail message to: Diane.Baedeker@state.ma.us. Please include your name, phone number and mailing address. Questions? Call Diane Baedeker Petit at 617-626-1752. ♦

Notice to readers:

Due to an uncertain state budget situation, it may become necessary to change the Farm & Market Report schedule without notice.

If you have an e-mail address, please let us know (see box to the left) so that we may not only send you the newsletter electronically, but also notify you of schedule changes.

If you have any questions or comments, call or e-mail Diane Baedeker Petit at 617-626-1752, Diane.Baedeker@state.ma.us. ♦

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